

Garcia 1

Kurt Wetterling Interview Transcription

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Line 1- **Garcia:** Ok, well, I'm Mark Garcia. I'm at Grace Prep- uh- Preparatory Academy on April 1st, at about 10 o'clock, 9:45, with Mr. Kurt Wetterling, and I will be interviewing him regarding his experience as an educator. And I wanna clarify for you, Mr. Wetterling, that I'm gonna record the interview, and upload it to the UD Oral History Repository. Is that ok with you?

Line 2- **Wetterling:** Yes.

Line 3- **Garcia:** Ok, I also wanna clarify for the people listening, that, um, Mr. Wetterling will probably refer to me as Joe-T throughout the interview. It's just an old nickname, and that's what we are gonna go by. So, I just kinda wanna start it off really broad. What was your experience with your own education?

Line 4- **Wetterling:** Uh my own education was a series of uh, public schools, uh, because I was a military brat, we moved all over uh. I don't recall ever spending more than three years, uh, at any given school. Most of the time it was only two. Uh, always public schools, and it served its purpose.

Line 5- **Garcia:** How was moving around from school to school and not really spending time in one place. Did that affect you in any way?

Line 6- **Wetterling:** Sure. Uh, in a lot of ways. Some I've probably never even figured out, but um uh it was uh not uh the ideal that I would have chose, and in fact when I had my own children, uh, we've lived in the same house for 40 years, they went to Grace Prep for their entire education, uh because I was committed for them to not have the same experience I did.

Line 7- **Garcia:** Interesting, so in that case you would say that your education, you said it served its purpose, so it wasn't really the ideal that you wanted.

Line 8- **Wetterling:** Um, at the time I never really gave it much thought I suppose. I never felt like I wasn't getting what I needed, but the importance of it was not emphasized at the time to the degree uh that I would place on it for my own kids or for the kids that I teach.

Line 9- **Garcia:** Ok, so, you're mentioning that it wasn't ideal, does that mean that you regret your education, or do you think that it shaped you into who you are and was ultimately worthwhile.

Line 10- **Wetterling:** Sure, uh, I think that we are all just a, um, a result of all the experiences that we've had, and nobody ever has all good experiences, hopefully nobody ever has all bad experiences, but it's what molds us into who we are, and I have no regrets. I would just, I did just make sure I handled it differently with my own kids.

Line 11- **Garcia:** That makes sense to me. So, then I guess moving on to um, I know that you've had some other careers other than teaching, could you expound upon that a little bit?

Line 12- **Wetterling:** Sure, I graduated from college with a degree in marketing, business, started off in sales, worked in sales for a long time, eventually worked in management, and then to the at the point that uh I was no longer concerned most with making money, uh was in a position to do something else, and that's when I began to teach.

Line 13- **Garcia:** Interesting, alright. For a while were you both teaching and working a separate job?

Line 14- **Wetterling:** Still do.

Line 15- **Garcia:** Still do.

Line 16- **Wetterling:** Yeah, it's an interesting story. Um, I worked for a company, um and by this time I had gone back into sales and um was successful. I had you know all the benefits and the

company car and the 401k and all the things that are important I suppose. Um and I went to them one day and said I want to change our agreement, and I want to give you all the benefits: give you the car, the 401k, the insurance, and be just a contract worker, and be paid just a percentage of what I produce rather than be an employee. And they said, why would you do that? And I said because I wanna teach, and just do this on the side. And they said, well we'll pay you more money, and I said, you're missing the point, I'm talking about a pay cut here. It's just what I wanna do, and they said that's the dumbest idea we've ever heard in our lives.

Line 17- **Garcia:** *laughs*

Line 18- **Wetterling:** And I said you're probably right, but I feel committed to give it a shot. And they said, uh, well we can't uh go along with that plan, we need you to be a full-time employee. And I said, and I can't go along with that plan, and I thought we had kinda struck a balance there that works for both of us. I said: but let me explain the alternative so that we are on the same page and there is no question. I said if you can't live with this, and I get it, there's no hard feelings, but I'll take the four biggest customers with me, and leave and do what I wanna do somewhere else, and you'll lose that business.

Line 19- **Garcia:** Interesting.

Line 20- **Wetterling:** And they said, well um, we don't think that will happen, but we wish you the best of luck. And so, I left, took the four biggest accounts with me, still have them to this day, and have approached it differently.

Line 21- **Garcia:** So, you started your own business?

Line 22- **Wetterling:** Yes.

Line 23- **Garcia:** How did that go? And how does that coincide with being able to teach on the side as well, or not on the side because teaching is your primary focus?

Line 24- **Wetterling:** Uh, yeah, it has worked out well for 11 years. I mean, um, at first, I thought it was gonna be, at first it was very difficult to draw those lines where they needed to be drawn, and and do both uh jobs well. But like anything else, if you do it long enough, you work out the wrinkles and it works fairly well.

Line 25- **Garcia:** So how many hours a week would you say you work doing your sales job compared to your teaching?

Line 26- **Wetterling:** Uh, it's probably 50/50 now, I guess.

Line 27- **Garcia:** 50/50.

Line 28- **Wetterling:** Yeah. I will say this, the first year, especially the first semester that I taught, I had never worked harder for less money in my entire life. And as I reflected on what they had told me, this is the dumbest thing we have ever heard of, I started to agree with them for a little bit. But after the first semester it got a little easier, and after the first year I thought, no, I knew what I was doing.

Line 29- **Garcia:** Yeah.

Line 30- **Wetterling:** Yeah.

Line 31- **Garcia:** And then, did you teach anywhere else other than Grace Prep?

Line 32- **Wetterling:** No.

Line 33- **Garcia:** No, you've taught here the entire time?

Line 34- **Wetterling:** Entire time.

Line 35- **Garcia:** What caused you to choose Grace Prep, what stuck out to you?

Line 36- **Wetterling:** Well, both of my own children had gone all through the entire system here, um and so I knew it well, had been involved since day one of Grace Prep.

Line 37- **Garcia:** Ok

Line 38- **Wetterling:** The schedule, three days a week, uh, made it real easy for what I wanted to do, where I could spend a lot of time on Tuesdays and Thursdays doing another job. Um, so the model fit well, the people I knew, and frankly I'd be fired if I worked at a public school.

Line 39- **Garcia:** Makes sense. We are still recording, good, just double checking, cause you never know. *laughs* So, I guess we are, no, we didn't actually. What exactly was it that compelled you to teach? What was it that pushed you towards that direction?

Line 40- **Wetterling:** Uh. You know I wish I could tell you exactly, um, but priorities changed. Uh, what pushed me into business, uh, initially, was just I thought that would be the most profitable. I wanted to raise a family, I wanted my wife to be able to stay home and be a full-time mother, and I didn't think that would be possible if I was teaching.

Line 41- **Garcia:** Ok.

Line 42- **Wetterling:** Um, so it was money driven, but for a long time I felt like, when I get to the point financially where I'm not responsible for an entire family, where I've done everything I've wanted to do, where I have achieved the level of financial success that I thought was important, and I can scale back, then I'd still like to teach. I thought, um and I have no idea why I thought this to be honest with you, but I thought I might have a little talent for teaching and wanted to see if that was the case.

Line 43- **Garcia:** You're scaring me, you're sounding like me talking to myself right now.

Line 44- **Wetterling:** That's why we're here. For you to be scared.

Line 45- **Garcia:** *laughs* That sounds about right. So, um, I guess we did already cover this, why did you choose to teach at a private school instead of a public one, but do you want to go into more detail?

Line 46- **Wetterling:** Well, um, uh, there's advantages to teaching at a private school for sure. Uh, there are, there's a lot more freedom. Obviously, the Christian world perspective, you can discuss your faith, you can impact kids in a way that's a lot different than I could have impacted them in a public school setting. That's not to say anything negative about public school.

Line 47- **Garcia:** Mhm.

Line 48- **Wetterling:** Uh, but, having been in a lot of my classes over the years, I think that you would testify to the fact that, um, there were tests, but I didn't teach to the test. There were textbooks, but we deviated from those, and based on what was going on, on this campus, or what was going on in the country or in the world, if on any particular day that was more important than the Magna Carta, um, then that's what we would focus on, because I try to teach to life instead of teaching to the test, and in public school you have to teach to a specific test.

Line 49- **Garcia:** I do remember distinctly, um, every day when we walked into your class, we would start, you know, first five or ten minutes of class, just talking about whatever was happening that day.

Line 50- **Wetterling:** Yeah, what in the world is going on.

Line 51- **Garcia:** What in the world is going on today, and that, I feel like, sometimes those discussions, like you are saying, they were some of the most lively discussions we had in that class. People didn't even wanna get to history, they were too focused on what is going on.

Line 52- **Wetterling:** What's interesting, and I don't know that I would have guessed this eleven years ago when I started, but but now I've done it long enough where I've had students that I'd taught in ninth grade come back that are married and having kids, certainly graduating or graduating soon, and they always wanna come back and visit and say hello, and I've never had a single one of them say: do you know what really impacted me, that history lesson on the reformation that we did that spring semester. Nobody's ever said, oh man when you taught me grammar, oh my gosh my world changed.

Line 53- **Garcia:** *laughs* Yeah.

Line 54- **Wetterling:** But they've all said they remember the discussions, and if you can have those discussions and they mean something, and you can tie it to what you're trying to teach, then it's a win for everybody.

Line 55- **Garcia:** Yeah, I would agree. I've, you included, I've had multiple very great history teachers in my day, and I'd say, all of them kinda the key point that happens is they're not necessarily just teaching the history, they're, you know, including it in the modern day, they're, you know, giving some type of further than just the words on the page themselves.

Line 56- **Wetterling:** Mhm. I love history.

Line 57- **Garcia:** I do too.

Line 58- **Wetterling:** And yet, history can be so boring, if you're just looking at the words on the page. If you can't make it meaningful then it's going to be lost on kids, and I get that.

Line 59- **Garcia:** Yeah, that's 100% true, I can't argue with that. So, then I guess, one thing I could ask about private school students: I would, I did they surprise you, I, like I guess you've never taught in a public school, so you're not really understanding the public schoolers from a

teaching perspective, but I'm sure you understand them from your own personal, so how are they different, uh private-school and public-school students?

Line 60- **Wetterling:** Uh.

Line 61- **Garcia:** Or how are they the same as well.

Line 62- **Both:** *laugh*

Line 63- **Wetterling:** Uh, they're the same, in my particular case, in ninth and tenth grade primarily, they're the same in that they're all, whether it's private or public, a bundle of hormones that really wanna be someplace else.

Line 64- **Garcia:** Yeah.

Line 65- **Wetterling:** Um, that's universal, when I was 14, 15, and 16 I was a bundle of hormones that would rather be someplace else. So that's, that doesn't change. What does change in private school is, number one, there's so much, so many fewer of them. So, when you're in a class that has eight people, uh anywhere from eight to twenty, but I've had classes of eight people and the average is probably fourteen. That's a huge difference than a class of forty. And, um somebody, somebody, a kid that was coming in from public school, they asked him what do you fear most about coming into the Grace Prep scenario, and he said: there's not gonna be anywhere to hide. And they asked him at the end what did you like best, and he said: there was nowhere to hide. So, when you are in a class of eight, you are gonna participate whether you want to or not. Uh, and that's one of the things that make it unique, and obviously how you approach each subject, and uh whose worldview you're advancing and whatnot.

Line 66- **Garcia:** Yeah, I would say definitely that that student you just mentioned, that was kinda my experience as well coming into Grace Prep. I started in eighth grade and I came from

public school just shy, you know, in my shell, didn't wanna really participate in anything, and then you have to, you do not get a choice in the matter, you just have to.

Line 67- **Wetterling:** Yeah, and that's really, it unfortunate that public school can't experience that, cause it's in those relationships, and in being forced to be engaged, that the learning happens.

Line 68- **Garcia:** Yeah.

Line 69- **Wetterling:** That's the way it is.

Line 70- **Garcia:** Yeah, so, I guess we can move on now to your experience with your students' academic performance. Has it changed throughout the years, or has it been consistent?

Line 71- **Wetterling:** It's changed dramatically.

Line 72- **Garcia:** How so?

Line 73- **Wetterling:** Um, in 11 years, um, what the material is your teaching hasn't change. History, it's still history, they haven't gone back and modified much of it.

Line 74- **Garcia:** *laughs* No.

Line 75- **Wetterling:** Um, but you are fighting for attention span, and every year you are fighting harder to get less of it. When I started, there were just one or two students who had a cell phone, and they would never dream of bringing them to class.

Line 76- **Garcia:** Right.

Line 77- **Wetterling:** And now think of how much time is spent on the cell phone or on the internet or, it's just, there's just a lot more distractions. So, it makes it harder to capture their attention and get the most out of it. And then when you put a pandemic on top of it, all bets are off.

Line 78- **Garcia:** Yeah, I guess then I could ask what methods do you have to use now to be able to make sure you are holding on to attention, or do you just kinda have to rely on them to actually want to pay attention at that point.

Line 79- **Wetterling:** If you relied on them...

Line 80- **Garcia:** *laughs*

Line 81- **Wetterling:** ...you'd be in a desperate situation. Uh, a lot of it is the same thing that I tried to do when you were in ninth grade English and ninth grade history and tenth grade history. You've got to develop a relationship and make them want to be there and participate. You said yourself you came in from eighth grade, you were shy. Well so what...

Line 82- **Garcia:** *laughs*

Line 83- **Wetterling:** ...shy gets you nowhere so let's get involved. Um, and that's a challenge. It's a bigger challenge now, but it's always been a challenge. Uh, you know, there's the old cliché that teachers like to throw around: students don't care how much you know until they know how much you care, uh so you've got to figure out a way to let them know you care, not just about the material but about their success overall, and then their success with the material, and that can be challenging sometimes.

Line 84- **Garcia:** Have you ever had experiences with, I guess what's the hardest experience you've had with a student where you've tried to relate, and it just doesn't go through.

Line 85- **Wetterling:** Well, um, every kid has a backstory, and you don't know what those backstories are 95% of the time, you know they're there, but there can be physical situations, there can be physical situations, there can be things going on at home that I can't even suspect,

but they manifest themselves in how well a student is going to respond, and the majority of them respond to humor.

Line 86- **Garcia:** Yeah.

Line 87- **Wetterling:** And they respond to, um, somebody that they respect. And most of the time that involves liking somebody as well...

Line 88- **Garcia:** Yeah

Line 89- **Wetterling:** but not always. And the teachers that wanna be liked before anything else generally are the ones that get walked on.

Line 90- **Garcia:** Yeah

Line 91- **Wetterling:** The teachers that are respected are able to do a lot better.

Line 92- **Garcia:** Yeah. I think you walked that thin line very well. I remember because you managed to mix humor with being respected and still being liked. I remember, I don't think, at least in my class when I was there, and the class above mine who I knew pretty well, and the class below, all the students respected you, and I'm fairly certain all the students liked you. You were a favorite.

Line 93- **Wetterling:** Uh, I'd agree with the respect part, because honestly, I demand that.

Line 94- **Garcia:** *laughs* You do.

Line 95- **Wetterling:** Um, because the minute you lose that, or the minute you never get that you've lost the class.

Line 96- **Garcia:** Yeah.

Line 97- **Wetterling:** If they don't respect you, they're not gonna perform, they're not gonna contribute, they're not gonna engage. They view it as a waste of their time, and it probably is.

Um, so I demand respect first, and everything else follows after that, and usually pretty well.

Now there may be kids that, if you sat down and had a cup of coffee with them, they'd say: man, I never did care for him, and nobody is liked by everybody, but hopefully most of them would say: you know, it wasn't that bad being in there, and I took some things away that are still useful today.

Line 98- **Garcia:** Yeah.

Line 99- **Wetterling:** It's a win.

Line 100- **Garcia:** It's a win. Alright, I guess to move on then, you mentioned that, at least with history, the curriculum doesn't change that much, but you also taught English, right, and still do?

Line 101- **Wetterling:** No.

Line 102- **Garcia:** No?

Line 103- **Wetterling:** This is the first year I haven't.

Line 104- **Garcia:** Wow, I didn't know that. Well, how has the English curriculum changed throughout the years?

Line 105- **Wetterling:** That's a good question, and it has changed a lot over the ten years that I've taught because there's so many different elements of the English side of it. In every English class you're teaching: literature, writing, grammar, vocabulary, all the different parts of that subject that all have to come together, and in the end produce some student who can read and write fairly well and express themselves.

Line 106- **Garcia:** Yeah.

Line 107- **Wetterling:** And what the powers that be think that the best tools to do all those things uh with change every couple of years. No, this is the best way to teach vocabulary, no this,

grammar should really be handled this way, no, we can't read those stories because of these reasons, we have to read these stories. And all the while, kids aren't reading any of them, because they can go online and figure out the answers to the questions. So, uh, English is much harder to teach, and evolves more rapidly based on what the current theory is.

Line 108- **Garcia:** Interesting. Now, we've mentioned it already, but I do wanna talk about, um, the privatization movement with schools, because it's a thing that's been going on, you know, for maybe the past ten, twenty, maybe even thirty years, and you said your children, they did Grace Prep the whole way through, so they were private schooled the whole way through. You've only taught at a private school. So, do you think that the privatization movement is a good thing? Bad thing? Pros and cons?

Line 109- **Wetterling:** I think private schools offer an alternative for families that are looking for one, but in my mind that's not privatization of schools.

Line 110- **Garcia:** Ok.

Line 111- **Wetterling:** Um, that is, people of a like mind forming an alternative that will teach other people who share that like mind from a particular world view, and if that's Christian schools fantastic, if it's a fine arts schools, fantastic, but when I think of privatization, I think more along the lines of charter schools, and, uh, when you privatize what's designed for the public good then the, um, the objective becomes profit rather than product. I would say, um, there's also a trend towards privatizing prisons, and um, I don't think that is the best solution for society, because it's no longer then about reforming or even providing, it's about profit, and that's a slippery slope.

Line 112- **Garcia:** I wrote an essay on that that got me into the college I'm going to now.

Line 113- **Wetterling:** Outstanding, did you agree with what I said?

Line 114- **Garcia:** Yeah.

Line 115- **Wetterling:** Ok.

Line 116- **Garcia:** I did. Private prisons are no good.

Line 117- **Wetterling:** I wouldn't think so, but that's just me.

Line 118- **Garcia:** Um, ok, but to talk about private schools, maybe not the privatization movement, but just working at a private school itself, does that affect diversity in the classroom at all?

Line 119- **Wetterling:** Sure. Of course. *laughs* Frankly, that's one reason families send their kids to private schools, not a good one, but sure. Now, um, there's a whole lot more diversity here at Grace Prep than there was 11 years ago when I started.

Line 120- **Garcia:** For sure.

Line 121- **Wetterling:** Ah, there's, there's way more than when my own kids went here, but that's because there's been a concerted effort in order to make that happen.

Line 122- **Garcia:** Mhm.

Line 123- **Wetterling:** But yeah, Grace Prep, and I'm sure most public schools, provide little bubbles for their kids, and that's not always a good thing, um, but it's one of the benefits or one of the things that are not quite so good, depending on how you wanna look at it.

Line 124- **Garcia:** Ok, so in a sense, now that Grace Prep has gotten a little bit more diverse, you're saying, cause you said public schools kinda have that bubble where you can kinda congregate with your own like people of like mind in your own little bubble, but with Grace Prep

it's more you're just kinda with everybody. So, would you say, that way, diversity in a private school setting is actually more fruitful than diversity in a public school setting?

Line 125- **Wetterling:** No.

Line 126- **Garcia:** No.

Line 127- **Wetterling:** Not necessarily.

Line 128- **Garcia:** Ok.

Line 129- **Wetterling:** Um, because...

Line 130- **Off camera:** Hi guys!

Line 131- **Wetterling:** How are ya.

Line 132- **Off camera:** Great!

Line 133- **Wetterling:** ...because, um, even when you were here at Grace Prep, there were 400 kids, give or take, um, you ran around with 8 of them.

Line 134- **Garcia:** That's true.

Line 135- **Wetterling:** You're in your own bubble...

Line 136- **Garcia:** Yeah.

Line 137- **Wetterling:** ...it's just the bubble that those came from was smaller.

Line 138- **Garcia:** Ok.

Line 139- **Wetterling:** When you are at Martin High School and there are 4000 kids, you're still in your own bubble, but in the halls and in class you are subjected to a lot more diversity than you are here at Grace Prep.

Line 140- **Garcia:** Right.

Line 141- **Wetterling:** In general, in a small Christian school, it's gonna be, um, more white than anything, more privileged than poor...

Line 142- **Garcia:** *laughs* Yeah.

Line 143- **Wetterling:** ...more Fox News than MSNBC. It's a conservative environment, and there's nothing wrong with that, except when you leave it and you are experiencing the real world you realize: huh, they never told me about this.

Line 144- **Garcia:** *laughs* Yeah.

Line 145- **Wetterling:** And there's a lot of that out there, a lot of that out there.

Line 146- **Garcia:** Mhm, that, you definitely described the private school setting very well.

Line 147- **Wetterling:** Ah, yah know, um, there's a, I don't remember doing it in your class specifically, tell me if you recall this, but one of my favorite lessons is to just have a wastebasket in the middle of the room, and uh everybody comes in, and there's no seating charts, everybody sits where they want, but just like in church you go to the same pew every week.

Line 148- **Garcia:** *laughs* Yeah.

Line 149- **Wetterling:** Even though you can sit anywhere you want to.

Line 150- **Garcia:** Yeah.

Line 151- **Wetterling:** So, people come in and sit down and I say, uh, take out your homework. And everyone takes out their homework, 70% of it copied from somebody else, but whatever, we'll all pretend you came up with it on your own. And now, I want you to crumple it up, and we're gonna take turns one at a time, throw it into the trash can in the middle of the room, and if you make it into the trash can, you get 5 points on the next test. If you miss, aw, sucks to be you,

but everybody gets a chance. And then we go around, and of course everybody wants to move chairs then, or stand up, no no...

Line 152- **Garcia:** No.

Line 153- **Wetterling:** ... you picked where you sat, you stay there. Well, so and so's in front of me. I hate that for you, see if you can, can I stand up, no, you cannot. And so, every time, there is some kid that is sitting right in front of the trash can that doesn't even take it seriously and tosses it and miss. And then there are a lot of kids that are on the outside rows that are trying their best but they're too far from the trashcan or don't have a clear view and they miss. And at the end of it I say: what's our lesson here. And ya know, there's always some kids that are dense, and they say: uh, the lesson is, we shouldn't have put so much time into this homework. No sparky, that's not the lesson, what is the lesson. The lesson is that we all had the same opportunity, but we didn't have the same chance. And I said: you're damn right, and that's the way life is. And for those of you that somebody's paying \$10,000 a year to have your butt in this seat, your opportunity and your chance are both better than somebody that doesn't. And then there's a discussion that follows.

Line 154- **Garcia:** Yeah, interesting. We didn't do that in our class.

Line 155- **Wetterling:** Well, we should have.

Line 156- **Garcia:** *laughs* It definitely would have made some people think.

Line 157- **Wetterling:** Ah, yeah. That's probably just wisdom from my later years, I don't know.

Line 158- **Garcia:** Something like that.

Line 159- **Wetterling:** Yeah.

Line 160- **Garcia:** *laughs* And then, um, to get back to private schools I guess um: level of education. Do you think that private schools and public schools offer the same level of education, just in a different form, or does one offer a better form of education than the other?

Line 161- **Wetterling:** *inhales*

Line 162- **Garcia:** I know that's a hard question.

Line 163- **Wetterling:** Yeah, because my point of reference is really only Grace Prep.

Line 164- **Garcia:** Yeah.

Line 165- **Wetterling:** I would say this. I think, if you are, in the, let's break, let's break this into three categories.

Line 166- **Garcia:** Ok

Line 167- **Wetterling:** And if you are a student that is at the top of your game, the top of your class, that you are going to find success in whatever environment you are dropped into. You are gifted, you are talented, you are driven, you are going to get the most out of whatever is put in front of you. If you are at the other end of that spectrum, and you are in the lowest $\frac{1}{3}$, because you have learning issues, you have home issues, you have health issues, you have uh any number of things that keep you from being as successful as others, or even as successful as you could be.

There are more options for those two ends of the spectrum in public school.

Line 168- **Garcia:** Ok.

Line 169- **Wetterling:** There are advanced courses, there are dual credit courses, there are, uh, I can't remember the name of it, but there are courses, you simply can't afford to do all that at a private school, that public school can that careers to that top ten percent. And if you have a student or group of students that really needs some special guidance, some emotional help, some

physical uh disabilities that they need help to overcome, public school can afford to provide all that. But if you're in that big group that's in the middle, where you're not the super brightest and you're not the super neediest, um, then you're gonna get more out of private school than you are public school.

Line 170- **Garcia:** Interesting. I've never thought of it that way.

Line 171- **Wetterling:** I, and I have no idea if there's science to back that up, but that's just my experience.

Line 172- **Garcia:** Ok.

Line 173- **Wetterling:** Because those, that group in the middle will flourish with the more one-on-one relational teaching, um, and do well.

Line 174- **Garcia:** Interesting. Ok.

Line 175- **Wetterling:** If I have come up with a concept that's revolutionary...

Line 176- **Garcia:** *laughing*

Line 177- **Wetterling:** ...and there's a way we can market this and make money, let me know.

Line 178- **Garcia:** I mean it's on video.

Line 179- **Wetterling:** Yeah. I own that.

Line 180- **Garcia:** *laughs* You're on to something.

Line 181- **Wetterling:** Yeah.

Line 182- **Garcia:** Ok, well, I guess to move on from our brilliant ideas, um, how have teachers changed throughout the years? Are they better, are they worse? In your own experience. Cause you've seen, you said you've taught here for 11 years, so you've probably seen your fair share of teachers come and go through here.

Line 183- **Wetterling:** I think teachers are like any other profession. I think some of them are just incredible, and I am in awe as to what they can accomplish, and some of them suck...

Line 184- **Garcia:** *laughs* Yeah.

Line 185- **Wetterling:** ...and shouldn't, shouldn't be in this field. Um, and I could say the same about lawyers, and doctors, and accountants, and anything else. Can't say that about pilots, most of the pilots have to be good enough or else there'd be planes going down everywhere. But, let me just relate a quick story to you.

Line 186- **Garcia:** Sure.

Line 187- **Wetterling:** I was on an airplane going to visit my daughter, and this was early in my teaching career, but I had like a year under my belt, enough to know that I did have some talent, and I was on the plane and reading a book, and it was about teaching, how to be a better teacher, and there was a young girl next to me, your age, maybe a year older, cause she was about to graduate from college with a teaching degree. And normally, I'd really rather just sit and read.

When I go get a haircut, I say, I tell the girl: I'll give you \$5 more if you just don't talk to me. So, conversation is not what I was after, but she looked over and she said: oh, you're reading a book about teaching, and I said: well, I was. And she said: so, you're a teacher, and I said: yes I am.

And she said: I'm looking for my first teaching job. And I said: well good for you, I said: why did you get into teaching. And her exact words were: man, you're done by 3:30 and you get the summers off!

Line 188- **Garcia:** *laughing*

Line 189- **Wetterling:** I said best of luck, best of luck. But unfortunately, that's why a lot of people get into it...

Line 190- **Garcia:** That's true.

Line 191- **Wetterling:** ...and that's why in 3 years they're looking for another job.

Line 192- **Garcia:** Mhm. Fortunately, most of the people in my education department are not the same.

Line 193- **Wetterling:** They couldn't be, or they wouldn't be in your education department.

Line 194- **Garcia:** *laughing* That's true. Ok, so, I'm gonna move to technology now, cause I think that's interesting, because as you said, 11 years of teaching, technology has changed.

We've mentioned cell phones. But, has that affected, other than, you know, cell phones being a distraction, has technology helped you or hindered you in any way in your ability to teach?

Line 195- **Wetterling:** Yes.

Line 196- **Garcia:** Ok, how so?

Line 197- **Both:** *laughing*

Line 198- **Wetterling:** It has helped and hindered, just like everything does, you know. There is no magic bullet that is the key, the secret. Um, by the time your class came along, um, we actually had smart boards...

Line 199- **Garcia:** Mhm.

Line 200- **Wetterling:** ...and actually used those to a degree. When I started 11 years ago, there was zero technology in our classroom, and granted we are behind where public school is, because of the a the financial reason.

Line 201- **Garcia:** Right.

Line 202- **Wetterling:** But there was no technology in the classroom whatsoever. If you wanted to show a video, you had to sign up a week ahead of time for the video cart, you had to go get it

before your class, wheel it in, the person who had used it last had made spaghetti out of the wiring, you're having to try and figure out how to plug everything in, find the screen, hope it all works in order to show anything.

Line 203- **Garcia:** Right.

Line 204- **Wetterling:** Ok, so from there we come to here, where basically this year every class, uh, you're not only teaching the class, you're teaching online students.

Line 205- **Garcia:** Right, like my brother.

Line 206- **Wetterling:** Yes. So, you've gotta figure out a way to try to include kids online, which, let's face it, it's impossible.

Line 207- **Garcia:** It's very hard.

Line 208- **Wetterling:** And uh, be aware that you're being filmed all the time which cramps my style.

Line 209- **Garcia:** Yeah.

Line 210- **Wetterling:** And work around the technology. The flip side of that is, and every kid if they're honest will tell you, they can pull out their phone and find the answer to any question on any homework without ever cracking the book.

Line 211- **Garcia:** That's true.

Line 212- **Wetterling:** And most of them do.

Line 213- **Garcia:** Yeah.

Line 214- **Wetterling:** Um, after I've built a relationship with my freshman students I'll say: hey on the back of your quiz just put a number 1-100, what percentage of the students in your grade level get their homework online, and it averages 70%.

Line 215- **Garcia:** That's a lot.

Line 216- **Wetterling:** And they admit that. Now the downside is that they can't do that for the quiz cause they don't have that ahead of time.

Line 217- **Garcia:** *laughs*

Line 218- **Wetterling:** And heaven help them when it comes time for the test. But they're freshman, they haven't figured that out yet.

Line 219- **Garcia:** No.

Line 220- **Wetterling:** And it's um, it's, you have to fight that.

Line 221- **Garcia:** Yeah.

Line 222- **Wetterling:** So, the answer from people who are supposedly in the know is: well then you just need to come up with your own assignments that can't be found on the internet. Ain't nobody got time for that.

Line 223- **Garcia:** *laughs*

Line 224- **Wetterling:** Ah, because the minute you come up with them the next class has them.

Line 225- **Garcia:** Yeah.

Line 226- **Wetterling:** You know, it's just, you can't legislate morality. Especially with freshmen...

Line 227- **Garcia:** Especially with freshmen.

Line 228- **Wetterling:** ...or sophomores.

Line 229- **Wetterling:** So, technology has offered, uh, ways for teaching to be more creative, more engaging, at the same time it's offered students an end around, around, everything you're trying to do.

Line 230- **Garcia:** That makes sense.

Line 231- **Wetterling:** So, constantly walking that line.

Line 232- **Garcia:** Thin line. Ok, so, we're kinda at the end of it. We made it. My last question for you is, and there will be two little caveats to it, but how do you think education is going to develop in the future?

Line 233- **Wetterling:** Um. I think it was already on its way to having a lot of changes, and the pandemic is going to increase the speed of that exponentially. Um, I think we need to be a lot more cognizant about how some of the rest of the world goes about this and figure out what works and adapt accordingly.

Line 234- **Garcia:** Ok.

Line 235- **Wetterling:** Um, I don't think there is a one size fits all that is what people have kinda gone to in the past. I know in Germany, if you know you're not going to college, you know that's not your thing, you either don't care or that, you don't want to spend the time, whatever, that in Germany you can be a part of an apprentice program at 16 and learn an actual trade that is valuable, um, instead of figuring out a way to cheat on all the homework so you can get through, ah, graduation and then try to figure out how to earn a living, you know. Meet people where they are to the greatest degree you can.

Line 236- **Garcia:** Right.

Line 237- ***Lawnmower in the background***

Line 238- **Garcia:** We can let them pass.

Line 239- **Wetterling:** If they're going to.

Line 240- **Garcia:** Yeah, I'm not sure.

Line 241- **Wetterling:** That may be a joy ride.

Line 242- **Garcia:** *laughs*

Line 243- ***Lawnmower quiets***

Line 244- **Garcia:** Well. Ok.

Line 245- **Wetterling:** Maybe.

Line 246- **Garcia:** Maybe.

Line 247- **Wetterling:** Go ahead.

Line 248- **Garcia:** Yeah, I'll keep going. Um, so I guess that doesn't really, my next question was gonna be is education heading in the right direction, but I guess it's just heading in a direction based on what you're saying, and we're just gonna need to try and make sure it does, yeah?

Line 249- **Wetterling:** Uh yeah, and well, it's hard for me from my little tiny perspective to say that things are heading in the right direction with for the entire field, but I would say that we gotta get better than we are right now.

Line 250- **Garcia:** Ok.

Line 251- **Wetterling:** Um, we've got to, we're no longer near the top of the world in terms of how we educate kids...

Line 252- **Garcia:** Right.

Line 253- **Wetterling:** ...and there's no reason for that. We have more resources and more freedom to be innovative than any other country, and yet other countries are kicking our papache.

Line 254- **Garcia:** Yeah. That's very true, that's very very true. I've been doing some research on that recently, it's really interesting just how many other countries are just exceeding us in every way. It's sad.

Line 255- **Wetterling:** Yeah, and it's no different than almost any other topic you try to come up with, it's because the people that are making the decisions are making them based on their own agendas rather than what the best, uh, possible choices are for the greater good.

Line 256- **Garcia:** Right.

Line 257- **Wetterling:** Everybody's trying to protect their fiefdom, their philosophy, their turf, and it's not about philosophy, turf, or what's best for you. It's about what's going to put this country in the best position to be competitive.

Line 258- ***Lawnmower roars***

Line 259- **Wetterling:** Yeah.

Line 260- **Garcia:** Yeah. Um, I'll wait a second.

Line 261- **Wetterling:** I would.

Line 262- **Garcia:** Yeah. Alright, that's probably good. Um, so I guess that does kinda lead into my last little question, is, maybe you don't know: what is the right direction to head in, you think, what can we do to make the future of education better.

Line 263- **Wetterling:** Um, well again I only can think of it or look at it from, from my perspective.

Line 264- **Garcia:** Right.

Line 265- **Wetterling:** I, I would say learn to be more competitive, and get the people who teach involved in the process. You would be shocked at how many people that run the airport have never flown an airplane.

Line 266- **Garcia:** *laughs*

Line 267- **Wetterling:** And, um, as a result they don't have a clue. They don't, they don't see what the policies they come up with really look like when they're implemented in a classroom, and do they make any sense.

Line 268- **Garcia:** Mhm. Yeah.

Line 269- **Wetterling:** Um, until you start getting some input from those people who are on the frontlines, um, it's not gonna be a better situation.

Line 270- **Garcia:** *laughs* Yeah. Well, that really about wraps it up, do you have any other final thoughts you wanna add?

Line 271- **Wetterling:** Uh, I would say, I would share one more perspective or insight on private education. Private Christian education specifically.

Line 272- **Garcia:** Mhm. Go ahead.

Line 273- **Wetterling:** Because that is my purview, and I have advanced this theory, and, uh, nobody's ever disproved me, but we have three things to offer.

Line 274- **Garcia:** Mhm.

Line 275- **Wetterling:** Tell me this, if this is true from your perspective as a graduate.

Line 276- **Garcia:** Sure.

Line 277- **Wetterling:** We have, we only offer three things. Our product is: education, it's experience, and it's environment.

Line 278- **Garcia:** Yeah.

Line 279- **Wetterling:** So, if somebody's gonna pay \$10,000 to go to Grace Prep, or \$20,000 to go to Pantego, or \$30,000 to go to Oakridge, that's a lot of scratch.

Line 280- **Garcia:** Yeah.

Line 281- **Wetterling:** And what they are buying is: education, environment, and experience for their kids. Now which of those is the most important?

Line 282- **Garcia:** Depends on who you ask.

Line 283- **Wetterling:** Exactly!

Line 284- **Garcia:** *laughs*

Line 285- **Wetterling:** Exactly! Because, and trust me I know this from experience, for a lot of parents they don't care what's on that report card or what they graduate knowing, they want their kid to be in a protected bubble environment.

Line 286- **Garcia:** Mhm.

Line 287- **Wetterling:** Ok, you get one!

Line 288- **Garcia:** Yeah.

Line 289- **Wetterling:** A lot of them don't care about, um, who their kids run with or what their learning, they want them to have the experience.

Line 290- **Garcia:** Mhm.

Line 291- **Wetterling:** Ok, you get it. Ah, a lot of them want their kid to graduate with the best education possible.

Line 292- **Garcia:** Right.

Line 293- **Wetterling:** Alright, here you go. But you are having to balance the objectives from three different groups of people...

Line 294- **Garcia:** Yeah.

Line 295- **Wetterling:** ...to make how, what you do successful. And that can be a challenge. And if it goes in any one direction to far as a school, then you have committed some mistakes. Ok. If you are given all the experiences, and all the warm fuzzies and all the championships and they're not getting an education, you're not gonna be in business in five years.

Line 296- **Garcia:** Yeah.

Line 297- **Wetterling:** If they're getting the education but their kids hate coming here and they don't have friends and they don't have, um, things to do, you're gonna be out of business in five years.

Line 298- **Garcia:** Yeah.

Line 299- **Wetterling:** And if it's all just about the environment and chapels and warm fuzzies and, again, you're gonna be out of business in five years. There's three things, but you've got to keep those balanced.

Line 300- **Garcia:** Yeah.

Line 301- **Wetterling:** And that's my thought on private education.

Line 302- **Garcia:** Well, I think that about wraps it up then, perfect work. We almost did a full hour.

Line 303- **Wetterling:** Wow, look at us.

